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21 February 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR: PC SURVEY GROUP

SUBJECT : Minutes of Meeting (No. 2) held 19 February 1952

Present:

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I. General

1. Prior to discussing the topic of the meeting — capabilities — it was agreed to accept the minutes of the first meeting, which agreed to hold a special meeting of the Group to discuss our relations with

II. Paper of the Day

2. A paper was presented as a first-round approach on the problem of opc capabilities. The definition contained in this paper was modified to read:

Capacity to take effective covert action against designated targets overseas within established time limits.

This incorporated the inclusion of "against designated targets" between the words action and overseas.

3. The general discussion which followed was concerned with many aspects of the many-sided problem of capabilities, but was concentrated more on operational than organizational matters. It was

the consensus

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the consensus that ope has become greatly over-extended. Yet the over-extension is largely unseen. We are so wrapped up in short term actions that we fail to realize their effects on our longer range developments. It was agreed that we should become more reluctant to accept missions or tasks from other agencies and that before we are asked to do a job requiring a great deal of time and effort, as well as personnel, we should endeavor to find out in some detail the real importance of the operation to the requesting agency.

4. On the general question of how restrictive CIA administrative support ceilings have been upon our program, it was thought that we have not yet reached the limit of the restraints imposed.

5. It was suggested that the nature of covert operations are such that there is a relatively low success factor. Thus it might be possible to launch ten activities in the political and psychological field and find out later on that only one or two of them succeeded. As a rule, it is impossible to know in advance which particular idea or group of ideas will catch on.

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8. Another point raised was the importance attached to the ability of our Agency and pc especially, to inspire confidence and give an impression of total reliability with the agents it contacts. Mr. Brewer observed that there was a significant contrast during the war between [redacted] in that the former always managed to give an impression of extreme professional competence. It was suggested that it might be advisable to limit insofar as we can,

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Another aspect of this same problem is confidence in the organization due to its meticulous performance of essential mechanical details. As long as these are not done properly within the Agency, it is difficult to give an impression to people outside that we are running a tight ship.

9. The talk then shifted to the importance of the external prestige factor in Washington, and it was realized in general that our status in the official hierarchy is not yet one that commands the complete respect of others.

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11. The lack of discipline throughout the entire United States Government was then raised as another limiting factor in our performance. The tendency of many overt agencies to get into the covert act overseas results in a constant series of flank attacks and jurisdictional squabbles which divert us from getting on with the job. These in turn often force us to take on tasks for our own protection which are of second or third rate importance. Unless we do take them on in self-defense, the intrusion of another agency into the same field might result in blowing and damaging operations which we regard to have greater intrinsic importance.

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12. Another handicap

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12. Another handicap to our work is the general misconception that seems to prevail in this country that effective psychological warfare can be developed and measured in terms of the dollars applied to it. This idea seems to have taken an especially firm hold on Congress. (This violates Goebel's famous dictate that the best propaganda is free.)

13. The question was then raised of the separation within our own shop of semi-covert and truly covert undertakings. How much does our preoccupation with semi-covert operations work against the truly covert aspects of the show?

14. It was suggested that we should begin to differentiate between those limitations that we may have to accept and those which we might be able to do something about. In the first category is the general lack of coordination and misdirection which characterizes so much of the total United States' foreign program.

15. It was suggested that a factor which will have an increasing bearing on the raising of our capabilities lies in new techniques and developments in the scientific field, especially in communications, and in possible scientific methods of influencing other peoples. The advantages to be gained from utilizing these methods to the utmost might overcome the limitations we have in finding truly qualified personnel.

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diminishing returns

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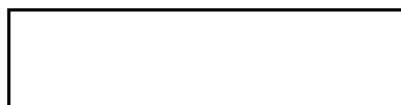
IV. Arrangements

21. Following this discussion, members of the Group were again reminded that it would be desirable for them to examine the initial agenda of problems, and were asked to assign them priorities and to suggest new subjects for discussion. It is essential that we do this in order that studies can be undertaken as far in advance as may be required for them to be both thorough and comprehensive. The capabilities paper will be given further refinement based on this discussion.

22. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 26 February, at 3:30 PM in [redacted] [redacted] paper will be discussed.

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Executive Secretary

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